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ABSTRACT
        Acquisition of pragmatic competence by second language
learners in the target language environment is examined, drawing on a study
of learners of English as a Second Language in Dublin (Ireland). The
hypothesis presented is that learners who perceive social or cultural
distance between themselves and the target language culture will have greater
difficulty in achieving pragmatic competence and developing cultural and
pragmatic awareness than those who do not perceive this distance. The first
section examines theories of communicative competence and the position of
pragmatic competence within them. Organization of knowledge into schemata,
and the influence this may have on the learner lacking schemata appropriate
to new cultural situations, are discussed. Social distance is described as it
applies to the language learner, and the stages through which a learner
passes in the acculturation process are also considered. The phenomenon of
culture shock and the stage of anomie as a potentially critical period for a
learner are explored. The second section considers the theory of speech acts
and their realization in achievement of communicative competence, and
difficulties in cross-cultural communication. The third section introduces
the empirical study, and the fourth presents its findings. Implications for
instruction are discussed in the final section. (MSE)

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Social distance as a factor in the achievement of pragmatic competence

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Social distance as a factor in the achievement of pragmatic competence*

by

Barbara Lazenby Simpson

0 Introduction

This paper is concerned with the acquisition of pragmatic com-
petence by second language learners in the target language envi-
ronment; its empirical component focuses on learners taking a course
in English as a foreign language at a language school in Dublin. The
paper takes as its starting point the hypothesis that learners who
perceive social or cultural distance between themselves and the target
language culture, will have greater difficulty in achieving pragmatic
competence and in developing cultural and pragmatic awareness, than
those who do not perceive this distance. While certain cultures are
"obviously" distant, such as those of Japanese and Arabic learners,
other learners from apparently similar cultural backgrounds, such as
Spanish or German, may also experience difficulty in appreciating the
general appropriacy of language to situations which are culture-bound.

The first section of the paper considers the question of the relation
between language and culture and then examines the principal theories
of communicative competence and the position of pragmatic compe-
tence within these theories. The organization of knowledge into sche-
mata is discussed, in terms of the influence this may have upon a
learner, particularly one who lacks the schemata appropriate to new
cultural situations. Social distance is described as it applies to the
language learner, and the stages through which a learner may pass in

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the process of acculturation are also considered. The phenomenon of culture shock and the influence of the stage of anomie as a potentially critical period for a learner are examined. The second section of the paper considers the theory of Speech Acts and their realization in the achievement of communicative competence. Grice's Conversational Maxims are discussed, and the difficulties which can occur in cross- cultural communication are described, particularly in relation to indirect speech acts. A number of studies concerned with the realization of speech acts are examined, relating both to native speakers and language learners. The third section introduces the empirical study and describes the individual subjects involved and the instruments used, while the fourth section presents the findings of the study. The fifth section outlines pedagogical proposals prompted by the results of the study.

1 Language and culture

1.1 The relation between language and culture

It is necessary at the outset to distinguish between the different relations which exist between language and culture. Among the native speakers of any speech community, language is often a clear indication of socio-economic status and ethnic or geographical origin. For example, speakers' use of language may signal a strong desire for identification with a particular group. However, in this study it is the strategies of communication as used naturalistically by the native speaker which are under consideration. These are viewed from the point of view of the learner, and the ease or difficulty with which the learner can enter and perform such communicative acts. Valdes (1986, pp.1ff.) describes language, thought and culture as three points in a constantly flowing circular continuum, and sees them as integral attributes of one another. She suggests that the general failure to adopt artificial languages, such as Esperanto, may be explained in terms of their separation from culture, which precludes deep thought. According to Valdes, although the English language has become a lingua franca, particularly throughout the international business world, it does have an underlying sociocultural basis which cannot be denied or ignored. This sociocultural aspect is evident in the language of advertising (Nilsen and Nilsen 1978), where the interaction between language and thought is particularly evident. The strong bond between language and culture suggests that greater appreciation of culture should help

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promote more successful language learning, which can then lead to greater cultural understanding, thus promoting a cyclical or spiral development and maximizing language acquisition as the spiral develops. The most successful language learners "can take on the 'mindset' of the speakers of the second language" (Valdes 1986, p.2).

Corder (1973) describes culture as an internal sharing process in which the members of that culture focus on internal aspects such as beliefs, the way they construe the world and classify phenomena, and commonly-held value systems (p.68f.). The concept of culture as outlined by Corder removes culture from the realms of the exclusivity of "civilization" and takes it directly into the sphere of everyday life. According to this view, cognitive approaches to the subject are not adequate in themselves and an affective component is necessary. If cognitive modes of awareness are called upon alone, then cultural learning will be superficial. It will concentrate solely upon information and ignore those aspects which are transmitted through all the perceptual modes, verbally as well as non-verbally (Robinson 1988, p.10).

If cognitive approaches are inadequate, then it is not enough merely to teach a description of a culture. Porcher (1986) states that "cognitive competence represents only an alphabet of the culture and is therefore only a partial aspect of cultural competence". For Lado (1957, p.110) "culture is synonymous with the ways of a people", and both forms and meanings are culturally determined or modified. If this is the case, then ability to read and speak another language does not guarantee that understanding will in fact take place (Morain 1978, pp.1–23).

Hymes (1972, p.40), considering the part played by language in the communicative system of a native speech community, regards language as entering differentially into educational experience, transmission of beliefs, knowledge, values, practices and conduct, with the resulting differences existing both interculturally and intraculturally. In addition to the more obvious differences, he also holds that no normal person and no normal community is limited to a single way of speaking such that it precludes indication of respect, insolence, mock seriousness, humour, role distance and intimacy by switching from one mode of speech to another (Hymes 1972, p.38). Thus the interaction of language and social life takes place on several different planes and is all-pervasive.

Gumperz (1972) sees each culture dividing its surroundings into discrete categories of environment and holds that "whenever particular

linguistic forms or other formal features of speaking are associated with particular activities or with particular identity relationships, the formal features in question come to symbolize the cultural values attached to these environments" (p.18). The close relationship between linguistic form and social meaning is part of a speech community's rules of speaking, and it is extended to interpret social meanings even by the speakers who do not normally engage in the social event in question (ibid.). This would suggest that misinterpretation or complete absence of comprehension of the underlying sociolinguistic message could result in misunderstanding and ineffective communication. Grammatical similarity alone is not enough to promote easy and accurate comprehension, but "religion, ethnicity, socio-economic position of speaker and similar social criteria may play a more important role" (Gumperz 1972, p.24).

Hymes makes essentially the same point when he states that "sentences that translate each other grammatically may be mistakenly taken as equivalent culturally" (1977, p.49). A linguistic form or code does not provide a limiting frame of reference; rather, the communicative activity must be considered as a whole, and then as part of the resources upon which the community or network of speakers draws (Hymes 1977, p.4).

Language as an instrument of communication, then, cannot be separated from its heuristic role as a device for organizing and categorizing contexts and situations as experienced by the speaker: "There is no doubt that there is a correlation between the form and content of a language and the beliefs, values and needs present in the culture of its speakers" (Saville-Troike 1989, p.32). Language can be seen as "the expressive dimension of culture" (Saville-Troike 1976, p.27). This is more the case when alternative ways of categorizing the same experience exist, so that the patterns of selection can only be determined in the actual contexts of use (Hymes 1977, p.19). According to this view, the correct interpretation of any communicative activity will thus involve social context analysis and the notions of private–public, informal–formal, positions, properties, relations, functions etc. (van Dijk 1977, p.219).

However, for the language learner, the application of a different system of rules to those underpinning the target language can result in interference or even confusion (Duguette 1985, p.525). Byram (1988, pp.15f.) views language learning in terms of education in the broadest sense, offering emancipation from the learner's native habitat and

culture. Such a wide-ranging and complex activity is only partly met by the study of form, function, literature and other clearly specific subjects. The situation is a more emotional one, involving the abandonment of one's own language and identity and the involvement with different and exotic people, places, food and life-style. Byram further sees this as an opportunity to stand aside from oneself and benefit personally from the new insights that this affords. He describes acquiring a new language as entering "a new way of life".

It would appear, therefore, that the closer a language learner can come to an understanding and appreciation of the target language culture, the more likely he is to develop an awareness of the correlation between the form and content of the language and the underlying culture of the target speech community. Such an awareness could, in turn, lead to more effective communication in the target language.

1.2   Communicative competence

The question of acquiring communicative competence is the principal focus of this study. It is necessary, however, to determine what constitutes such competence, initially with regard to the native speaker.

Chomsky (1965) distinguishes between competence and per-formance, arguing that "[performance] obviously could not directly reflect competence". He bases this statement on the fact that "natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course and so on" (p.4). "Performance" in this sense refers to actual language use and is concerned with the psychological factors involved in the perception and production of speech. Chomsky's view of performance does not take into account the question of sociocultural appropriacy or the mutually dependent aspects of lan-guage and culture as discussed in the previous section.

Criticizing Chomsky's view, Hymes (1972) asserts that "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (p.247): if competent communication is the prime objective of the speaker, then he must acquire "the knowledge to communicate effec-tively in culturally significant settings" in which speakers are seen as "members of communities, as incumbents of social roles" (ibid., p.vii). Hymes identifies four aspects of competence. The first aspect is that identified by Chomsky, systematic potential – whether and to what extent something is not yet realized, and in a sense not yet known; the second aspect is appropriateness – whether and to what extent some-

thing is in some context suitable, effective or the like; the third aspect is occurrence – whether and to what extent something is done; and the fourth aspect is feasibility – whether and to what extent something is possible, given the means of implementation available (Hymes 1977, p.95). The requirements for the achievement of competence in these terms are knowledge and its recognition, combined with the ability to implement it with respect to all four aspects.

According to Saville Troike (1989), communicative competence requires "knowledge not only of rules for communication, both linguistic and sociolinguistic and shared rules for interaction, but also the cultural rules and knowledge that are the basis for the context and content of communicative events and interaction processes" (p.2f.).

Considering communicative competence in terms of an ethnography of speaking, Hymes (1972) argues that "a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events and to evaluate their accomplishment by others". He sees this competence as "integral with attitudes, values and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward the interrelation of language with the other codes of communicative conduct" (Hymes 1972, pp.277f.).

Chomsky rejects this view of competence on the ground that "to incorporate nonlinguistic factors into grammar: beliefs, attitudes etc." amounts to "a rejection of the initial idealization of language, as an object of study" (1977, pp.152f.). He continues by describing language in these terms as "a chaos that is not worth studying". This viewpoint effectively denies the influence of culture on communicative acts. It is significant, therefore, that while Chomsky's definition of competence assumes that knowledge and performance are totally separable, Hymes, on the other hand, regards performance, intersubjective knowledge and participation as essential aspects of the ability to know a language (Duranti 1988, p.214). For Hymes, the processes of acquiring a language and simultaneously becoming a competent user of that language within a society, are closely interwoven and ultimately permit the relationship to be established between linguistic forms and their content, and their utilization within the appropriate context of speech. The satisfactory combination of these factors constitutes competence in his terms, and establishes speech as a means of both achieving understanding and promoting the required actions. Hymes thus views communicative competence as "the interaction of grammatical [...], psycholinguistic [...], sociocultural [...], and probabilistic systems of

competence" (Canale and Swain 1980, p.16).

Canale and Swain (1980), who extend their definition to the second language learner, see communicative competence as including both grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, and define "competence" as "underlying knowledge in a given sphere" (p.6). They do not include the factor of psycholinguistic competence, and they maintain that "perceptual strategies, memory constraints, and the like would seem to impose themselves in a natural and universal manner" (p.8). This assumes that psycholinguistic competence is acquired automatically by normal speakers in their native language. According to Canale and Swain, an integrative theory of communicative competence should include "a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social contexts to perform communicative functions and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse" (Canale and Swain 1980, p.20). Their model proposes, therefore, that communicative competence is composed of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and a knowledge of the strategies employed in authentic communicative situations.

Later, Canale (1983) revised the 1980 definition of sociolinguistic competence to refer only to the sociocultural rules of language use, and discourse competence became a separate component of the model. According to this later definition, sociolinguistic competence "addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction and norms or conventions of interaction" (p.7). Appropriateness of utterances, in this definition, refers to appropriateness of both meaning and form, and Canale asserts that "sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting utterances for their "social meaning", for example, communicative function and attitude, when this is not clear from the literal meaning of utterances or from non-verbal cues" (p.8). This definition focuses more firmly upon sociolinguistic competence in terms of the full and appropriate realization of speech acts.

The achievement of competence in Canale's terms requires the knowledge of when, to whom, and how to speak, as well as knowledge of the non-verbal signals and behaviour which contribute to the communication event in question. Cross-cultural differences can and do produce conflicts or inhibit communication, so that the notion of communicative competence can only be seen as an integral part of

cultural competence (Saville-Troike 1989, pp.21ff.). Students must "understand the cultural referents which words reflect in English [...] and even the patterns of thought such linguistic organization represents. This competence must also extend beyond the limits of verbal communication to the paralinguistic gestures which accompany speech and which differ between speech communities" (Saville-Troike 1976, p.19). Thus the interaction of language and social life takes place on many different planes and is all-pervasive.

1.3 Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence, which is one of the components of communicative competence, is the skill of knowing the circumstances in which a particular form of utterance is appropriate. This knowledge also demands an understanding of how the speech act is in turn related to the social values of the speech community. Chomsky (1980) views pragmatic competence as a system which underlies the ability to use "grammatical competence" for the purpose of achieving certain ends. He proposes that it is "characterized by a certain system of constitutive rules represented in the mind", and suggests the possibility of a person having "full grammatical competence and no pragmatic competence, hence no ability to use a language appropriately" (p.59). Thus the question of achieving appropriacy may depend entirely on pragmatic knowledge which would, in accordance with this definition, act as a monitor on the production of syntax and semantics.

Rubin (1983, p.17) extends the function of pragmatic competence, as defined by Chomsky, proposing three levels of knowledge which are essential for the realization of pragmatically competent speech: (i) the appropriate form-function relation, (ii) the social parameters which enter into the act, and (iii) the underlying social values in a society.

Fraser (1983, pp.30f.) describes pragmatic competence in terms of conveying an attitude, and sees linguistic communication, or pragmatics, as an interaction of "speaker-meaning" and "hearer-effects" in which a speaker is "attempting to communicate to the hearer by relying at least in part on the semantic interpretation of the linguistic form uttered", and success is achieved only when the speaker "has an attitude which he intends to convey to the hearer in using language and the hearer recognizes this attitude". While the contexts of speaking are numerous, speaker attitudes can be divided into four main categories – belief, desire, commitment, and evaluation – and successful communication can be said to be achieved when the hearer recognizes

what has been said and the attitude of the speaker towards the propositional content of the utterance (Fraser 1983, pp.36f.). When the hearer understands that the speaker intends to convey a request, an apology or a statement, communication has been successfully achieved.

Van Dijk (1981) defines pragmatic comprehension as "the series of processes during which language users assign particular conventional acts, i.e. illocutionary forces, to each others' utterances" (pp.217f.). He poses the question, "How does a hearer actually know that when a speaker utters such and such a sentence, the speaker thereby makes a promise or a threat?" He then provides a taxonomy of the knowledge required to achieve this successfully. The necessary information requires knowledge of

A properties of the structure of the utterance,

B paralinguistic properties,

C actual observation/perception of the communicative context,

D knowledge/beliefs in memory about the speaker and his properties,

E knowledge/beliefs with respect to the type of interaction going on,

F knowledge/beliefs derived from previous speech acts,

G general semantic knowledge,

H general world-knowledge (frames etc.).

This taxonomy clearly defines the social parameters and underlying social values which Rubin proposes as necessary levels of knowledge, and extends the requirement further to include world knowledge, paralinguistic awareness and broad semantic knowledge.

Faerch and Kasper (1984) distinguish between two types of communicatively relevant knowledge, declarative ("knowledge that") and procedural ("knowledge how"), and accordingly proposes two categories of pragmatic knowledge. Declarative pragmatic knowledge is represented in the form of rules, while procedural pragmatic knowledge is represented in the form of pragmatic procedures. The components which constitute pragmatically relevant declarative knowledge include linguistic (pragmalinguistic) knowledge, speech act knowledge, discourse knowledge, socio-cultural knowledge (including conversational maxims and interactional principles), context knowledge and knowledge of the world. Pragmatic procedures represent an aspect

of the overall processes of speech production. The speaker, having established a communicative objective comprising actional (speech act), propositional and modal content, then selects and combines pragmatic declarative knowledge from the six categories identified by Faerch and Kasper. The conversion into linguistic form takes place through selection of appropriate syntactic structures and relevant lexical material. Finally, feedback from the interlocutor is monitored so that outcome can be compared with intention and the sequence adjusted accordingly.

Levinson (1983, pp.45f.) distinguishes two levels at which social and cultural constraints operate on interaction: (i) cross-situational constraints relevant to social decorum generally and (ii) constraints appropriate only to specific interactional moments or specific kinds of cultural events. He further identifies clear "pan-cultural principles governing the production of polite or socially appropriate interaction". However, although the principles are understood cross-culturally, their realization can differ greatly as in the contrast between English and Japanese speakers in terms of the social status of participants and referents (Levinson 1983, p.10).

Bachman (1990) brings together many of the features of the earlier models of communicative competence and extends the definition even further. His model (p.87) divides language competence into organizational and pragmatic competence. The aspects of organizational compe-

Fig. 1 Bachman's model of pragmatic competence
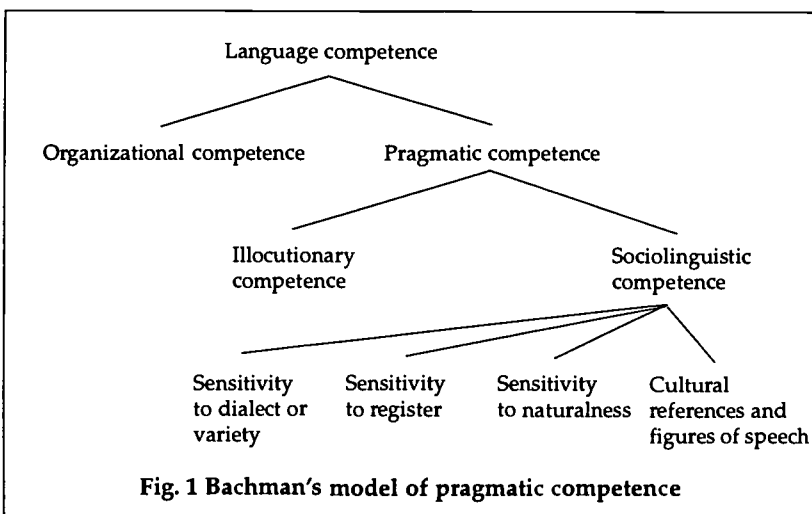
tence are grammatical and textual competence, which include the competencies involved in language usage such as knowledge of morphology, vocabulary, syntax, phonology and graphology. Textual competence refers to the knowledge necessary for joining utterances into a coherent text whether spoken or written.

In Bachman's model pragmatic competence is divided into illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. The illocutionary aspect, based on the theory of speech acts, which are considered in greater depth in section 2, is further divided into four macro-functions. These functions are ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative. The functions combine with the aspects of sociolinguistic competence which Bachman describes in terms of sensitivity to language and context. He divides this issue of sensitivity into four categories: (i) sensitivity to differences in dialect; (ii) sensitivity to register, which is determined by "field of discourse", "mode of discourse" and "style of discourse" (1990, p.95); (iii) sensitivity to naturalness, or the phrasing of an utterance in a "nativelike way"; and (iv) the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech, by which he means knowledge of "the extended meanings given by a specific culture to particular events, places, institutions or people" (ibid., p.97). Bachman thus quite specifically includes the necessity for cultural knowledge and understanding as one of the essential components of pragmatic competence. This particular aspect of the learners' knowledge will be examined in the empirical study that follows.

In considering pragmatic failure (or "the clanger phenomenon") in foreign language learners, Wildner-Bassett (1990) holds that "learners […] can only function in an acceptable manner within the target language community generally, if they are able to perceive and act within the bounds of the interplay among functional adequacy, situational appropriateness, norms of language use" (p.29). Thomas (1983) posits two causes of pragmatic failure in this context: (i) the learner's lack of "the foreign language means to express his/her pragmatic competence", and (ii) "cross culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour" (Thomas 1983, p.99). Communication between a native speaker and language learner can represent an unequal or asymmetrical relationship in which the learner can fall victim to the "clanger phenomenon". Thus unawareness or inadequacy in terms of pragmatic competence serves to exacerbate this sense of inequality in addition to contributing towards misunderstanding and confusion.

1.4 The organization of knowledge

The organization of knowledge has been described in terms of various structures, including "frames" (Minsky 1975), which are fixed representations of knowledge about the world; "scripts" (Schank and Abelson 1977), which are specialized to deal with event sequences; "scenarios" (Sanford and Garrod 1981), which describe the "extended domain of reference"; and "schemata", which are "higher-level complex knowledge structures" (van Dijk 1981, p.141) by means of which we organize and interpret experience. Schemata serve "to lead us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (Brown and Yule 1983, pp.238–56). They are of most relevance to the present study because they provide the necessary background from which a speaker may draw to meet the requirements of a familiar, or apparently familiar, situation. Thus schemata, for a native speech community, facilitate the application of intuition and prediction to the comprehension and production of discourse.

All speakers possess schemata which have developed in relation to their own experience. Thus when they encounter new experiences they must make a choice. Among the possibilities are, firstly, the application of an existing schema which, if inappropriate, may lead to misinterpretation or confusion, and secondly, the adoption of a neutral communicative device which may not signal the intended message properly or fully. In striving to achieve communicative competence, the second language learner may discover at a relatively early stage that some existing schemata will require modification in order to achieve a desired appropriacy of language use. Rivers (1981, p.319) identifies the problem thus: "where words seem to correspond in meaning in their denotation, or referential capacity, they may well diverge considerably in their connotation or the emotional associations which they arouse". The problem may also arise with reference to underlying social values. She proposes three levels of meaning which must be acquired by the student:

1. semantic meaning,
2. connotative meaning as used in the new culture with the linguistic devices employed for the expression of the evaluative and reactive aspects of culture,
3. the distinction of these culture-wide meanings from the personal ideas of the members of the new culture with whom they interact on an individual basis.   (Rivers 1981, p.321)

According to Murtagh (1988), if the learner's background is significantly different from that of the target language community, he or she may not in fact "possess the knowledge structure or schemata to adequately process the inherent meaning in a text" (p.17). Murtagh is concerned with reading skills, but the statement is equally applicable to speaking and listening. Cross-cultural misunderstanding suggests that

> communication between people from different ethnic groups breaks down due to three main factors, 1) different cultural assumptions, 2) different ways of structuring information or an argument, 3) different ways of speaking. The use of a different set of unconscious linguistic conventions to emphasize, to signal connections and logic and to imply the significance of what is being said in terms of overall meaning and attitudes. (Gumperz et al 1979, p.5)

Scarcella (1983, p.177) holds that conversational competence is not "built-in" and the second language learner must acquire new skills. The underlying conventions may vary greatly from one society to another and "co-occurrence restrictions and distributional rules and norms governing the environment and extent of use of these forms may be highly culture specific". Linguistic encoding must therefore interact with cultural knowledge to achieve desired appropriacy.

1.5 Schemata and the second language learner

Byram (1988, p.113) contends that the second language learner's existing schemata are inadequate to acquire cultural competence in a foreign language. If "pre-existing cognitive structures organize the processing of new information" (Freedman 1981, p.113), then when these are not culturally similar to or compatible with those of the target language, they can act negatively in the processing of the target language. For the learner, the question of realizing a speech act appropriately and effectively may be dependent upon the ability to utilize information contained in the appropriate schema. Blum Kulka (1991, p.256) states that "culture plays a dominant role in determining modes of speech act realization". Considering the case of requests, she concludes that the schema is governed by a cultural filter which affects the manner in which the requests are evaluated, and situationally appropriate forms are selected. "Requesting style" is one of the indices of a cultural way of speaking; interactional styles are culture-specific (ibid.).

1.6   Social distance

If a language learner perceives a social distance between himself and the target language group, then he may experience difficulty in achieving pragmatic competence and in developing the necessary schemata to perform speech acts appropriately. This is the basic hypothesis of this paper, and it is essential, therefore, to determine the nature of social distance and how it is likely to affect the language learner.

Schumann describes social distance as pertaining "to the individual as a member of a social group which is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language" (Schumann 1976, p.135). He defines the issues which are influential in the perception of distance in terms of the relationship which exists between the target language group and the second language learner. This relationship entails a dominant, non-dominant or subordinate relative position. Second language learners may have differing integrative patterns such as assimilation, acculturation or preservation, and may adopt a degree of enclosure or cohesiveness which can create a distance or barrier between the groups in question. The size of the learner group can be a factor, and also whether or not the groups are culturally congruent or divergent. The attitudes of the two groups are important, and finally the (intended) length of residence in the target language area (ibid., p.136). According to Schumann, the relative position of the groups may be determined in terms of "political, cultural, technical or economic status", and "enclosure" refers to structural factors of integration such as restrictions on marriage and separate school, club, church or recreational facilities.

Cohesiveness, on the other hand, is a feature of group size which, if large, in the context of the situation, promotes intra-group contact to the detriment of interaction between the groups. Congruence refers to cultural similarity between target language and learner groups. When the groups are culturally alike, integration is facilitated and social distance is reduced. Attitudinal orientation describes the cultural expectations maintained by each group towards the other. If one or both groups hold negative stereotypical images about the other, then the learner group can be inhibited in its acquisition of the target language and the negative force of social distance prevails. Length of residence, or intended length of residence, is another important factor involved in social distance. Intended lengthy residence in the target language environment tends to reduce social distance, as the learners are more likely to have an integrative motivation (Gardner and Lambert

1972) and therefore develop more extensive contacts with the target language group. All of these factors can combine and interact to create good or bad learning situations which are based upon the extent to which social distance is minimized or promoted (Schumann 1976, pp.135-143).

1.7 Acculturation

The gradual process of acquiring competence in a second culture is described as acculturation. It is "determined by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language culture" (Ellis 1985, p.252). In the Acculturation Model, Schumann (1978) proposes that "the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language" (p.34). Schumann's Acculturation Model lists social variables which influence the overall learning situation. These factors include the concept of social equality between the target and learner groups and the desire of both groups for the assimilation of the learner group. Other factors such as cohesiveness and congruence, referred to in the previous section, are also included. The social factors are combined with psychological factors such as language and culture shock and motivation. These factors are affective in nature and, if regarded by the learner in a negative light, may impede language acquisition so that the learner "fails to convert available input into intake" (Ellis 1985, p.252).

Schumann suggests that when either social or psychological distances are marked, then the learner fails to progress beyond the early stages of language acquisition and his language becomes pidginized. The persistence of the pidginization process results in fossilization, which is characterized by the incorrect forms or structures which appear in the learner's otherwise competent use of language.

Acton and de Felix (1986, p.22) advance a model of acculturation which has four distinct stages. The first is the "tourist" or early phase, characterized by "phrasebookese" and some degree of culture shock. This is followed by the "survivor" stage, which is manifested in a type of "pidgin". Some learners, for example manual workers, are content to remain at this stage. At this point the "acculturation threshold" may be passed to enter the next level, that of the "immigrant". This is attained by most literate people who spend an extended period in the target culture. The majority of learners do not progress beyond this stage. The final phase is that of the "citizen", where the learner's fluency

is akin to that of a native speaker and only occasionally fails on the cultural level.

This model does not explain, however, the nature of the acculturation process. It seems to be advanced by an increasing familiarity with social and cultural mores, but for the linguist it is necessary to determine how this may be identified and even measured. Hamilton (1983) studied the effect of cognitive abilities upon the acculturation process. His argument is based upon the premise that knowledge is stored in concepts which are themselves composed of facts and states. These he terms "semantic labels" and sees the acquisition of the semantic labels of culture as the essence of socialization.

Focussing on specific language skills, Wong-Fillmore (1983) distinguishes five stages in language acquisition. The moment of particular interest for the purposes of this study is the step from the second to the third stage, which correlates with the transition from advanced beginner to proficiency and the acculturation threshold. At this point the learner is beginning to develop the semantic chains similar to those constructed unconsciously by the native speaker.

It would thus appear that we are considering two separate features which when they coincide, create a period of optimum development both in terms of language acquisition and cultural integration. On the culture shock "scale", the point of anomie is a period of openness to the new language, with a decrease in dependence upon the learner's first language. This stage is in part a feature of length of residence in the target language country. The acculturation threshold appears to be additionally a function of target language development. Accordingly, the coincidence of the two features would indicate a stage of great importance for the learner, when language learning and acquisition can progress at greater speed than previously, and with greater success and less inhibition on the part of the learner. Acton (1979) concludes that four months in the target language country appears to be a minimum period necessary to "get one's bearings" (p.70).

1.8   Culture shock

"Culture shock" has been described as a phenomenon which manifests itself in a variety of ways and degrees of severity. It generally only affects the language learner who is studying in the target language country and who must therefore live among native speakers, feeling distanced and perhaps isolated from his own natural environment. It has been described in terms of varying severity, but all researchers

concur in regarding this "condition" with a seriousness which emphasizes its potentially destructive nature. Foster (1962, p.87) describes it in very extreme terms as "a mental illness" which manifests itself in irritability, depression and annoyance.

Oberg (1960, pp.178ff.) describes the reactions which are commonly evinced by sufferers of culture shock as rejection, retreat, suspicion and hostility, and a tendency to concentrate deliberately on the literal meaning of words, thereby avoiding non-linguistic communication which might assist in clarifying the message. Clarke (1976, pp.380f.) compares culture shock to schizophrenia, a state in which social encounters are "inherently threatening, and defense mechanisms are employed to reduce the trauma". Culture and language shock are also seen as a "clash of consciousness", with the result that difficulties arise for the learner which are the result of "fundamental differences in definitions of reality". Adler (1972, p.8) describes culture shock in psychological terms as

> a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse. The individual undergoing culture shock reflects his anxiety and nervousness with cultural differences through any number of defense mechanisms: repression, regression, isolation and rejection. These defensive attitudes speak, in behavioural terms, of a basic underlying insecurity which may encompass loneliness, anger, frustration and self-questioning of competence.

Brown (1980, pp.132f.) distinguishes four successive stages which the language learner must pass through. First there is a period of excitement and euphoria stimulated by the newness of surroundings and the sense of achievement at having arrived after a period of planning. There may also be a feeling of independence which could be a novelty, combined with a sense of freedom. This is followed by a plunge into the real effects of culture shock, which comes as more and more cultural differences intrude into the learner's own images both of self and security. During this phase the learner will seek the company of his fellow countrymen and away from this, will feel the full impact of isolation, depression, anxiety and vulnerability.

The third stage, which may prove to be the most crucial one for the language learner, is a period of gradual recovery and is characterized by "culture stress" (Larson and Smalley 1972) and "anomie" (Lambert 1963). During this phase progress is made slowly, with a gradual accep-

tance of the difference in thought and values, and a move towards greater empathy (Guiora 1972) with the natives of the target language environment.

The concept of anomie was originally defined by Emile Durkheim in 1897 as "feelings of social uncertainty or dissatisfaction". Lambert defines this stage as an experience of alienation from both the target culture and the native culture. This period of adaptation to the new cultural environment brings with it a sense of distance from the native environment or a sense of homelessness in which there are no strong ties either to the native culture or to the second culture.

Lambert's research reinforces the belief that anomie is at its strongest when the learner begins to feel a certain "mastery" of the target language and is also benefitting from a lack of interference from the native language. This stage is characterized by "thinking" and "dreaming" in the target language. In Lambert's (1969) study of English-speaking Canadians studying French, the interaction of anomie and increased language skill led the learners to revert deliberately to their native language for reassurance as to their linguistic origins, but this necessity diminished as they moved through the third stage. Gradually the sense of anomie decreased as language skill and acculturation increased, leading the learner towards the fourth stage.

Finally, the fourth phase is one of near or full recovery, with the learner capable of accepting both the new culture and a new identity, which is not the same as that of stage one, but is that of a more developed and confident individual.

2 Speech Acts

2.1 The work of Austin and Searle

Speech Act theory, developed by Searle (1969) from the original work of Austin (1962), proposes that in making an utterance, a speaker performs an illocutionary act which contains a "force" within it, for example, a promise or a warning. The study of speech acts in first language communication has chiefly been concerned with "communicative competence" (Hymes 1964), which conflates the concepts of linguistic and cultural know-how; it must be distinguished from the ability to get things other than utterances done, by others, through speaking (Reiss 1985, p.15).

Searle's taxonomy of speech acts is dependent upon their division

into classes which are illocutionary by nature. That is, that their effects are achievable through knowledge of the shared rules of meaning. Perlocutionary acts are not included as a group but are seen to be achieved recursively through one or another illocutionary act. For example, persuading the hearer is a perlocutionary act which requires that the hearer believes a statement which has been made as an assertive illocutionary act.

Searle's scheme analyses illocutionary acts into a propositional component and an illocutionary force (the speaker's communicative intention). The force expresses:

1. The speaker's psychological state. This is the "sincerity condition", e.g., belief in the case of an Assertive, desire in the case of a Directive.

2. The speaker's own linguistic goal. This is the "essential condition", the speaker's purpose being to make the hearer comprehend the utterance as a particular type of utterance through which speakers will make typical commitments.

3. The relation of the speaker's words to the state of the world, known as "direction of fit". For example, while assertives should match the world itself, directives are matched by the world through the agency of the hearer.

The five classes of illocutionary act identified by Searle are

Assertive (state, insist, swear that, complain, etc.)

Bringing about (declaratives – declare, bless, curse, name, etc.)

Commissive (promise, threaten, offer, refuse, etc.)

Directive (request, invite, suggest, order, etc.)

Expressive (thank, condole, apologize, greet, etc.)

In the empirical study that follows, speech acts from the categories of Directive and Expressive will be explored. These utterances are totally communicative, unlike representative utterances, or "egocentric speech", which are merely nonconversational responses to exigencies such as pain or delight (Reiss 1985, p.35). They imply both a speaker and a hearer.

When a speaker expresses an utterance he is commiting himself to an illocutionary meaning. For example, the utterance "Open the window" commits the speaker to a Directive which, according to Searle, also includes the belief that the speaker has the right to perform this Directive and the desire that the hearer will do as directed (Reiss 1985, pp.37f.).

If the conditions governing a particular utterance do not obtain, the speaker has still committed himself to all the intentions which are normally and conventionally encoded in this type of utterance. The use of the speech act "insincerely" can be deliberate, either for the purpose of misleading, as in lying, or in order to commit the speaker to the opposite of the expressed message, as in sarcasm.

Searle identifies the general intentions of a competent adult speaker in the performance of an illocutionary act as

1. the intention to produce in the hearer, an understanding of the point or purpose of his speech act;
2. the belief that this can be realized by the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention;
3. the belief that this should be achieved through mutual knowledge and understanding of the conventions governing linguistic communication (Reiss 1985, pp.40f.).

In reality, however, the relationship between felicity conditions, context and performance is a complex and finely balanced one, not least because the majority of speech acts may be performed indirectly when the speaker so decides. For example, the Directive "Open the window" may be performed indirectly by the Assertive "It's very hot in here".

Searle (1975, p.76) observes that "there can be conventions of usage which are not meaning conventions", and by these conventions "certain forms will tend to become conversationally established as the standard idiomatic forms for indirect speech acts". He claims that "the mechanisms are not peculiar to this language or that, but at the same time the standard forms from one language will not always maintain their indirect speech-act potential when translated from one language to another" (Searle 1975, p.76). Thus the determination of the acceptability of a given item regularly involves deciding whether a given expression not only can be but is conventionally used to convey something not literally expressed.

Morgan (1978) proposes the concept of the short-circuited (conversational) implicature for such cases as the request "Can you close the window?" Such short-circuiting of implicatures is a matter of convention; conventions of usage differ from one language to another. For example, the use of "Would you ... ?" and "Can you ... ?" questions to convey orders and requests is subject to a wide range of variation across languages (Searle 1975, p.76).

Clearly, the language learner who achieves a high level of formal

accuracy, may still fail to identify the particular form which is conventionally used in a specific context. The resulting language use may fail pragmatically and, as a consequence, establish tensions between a non-native speaker and his or her native interlocutor.

2.2 Grice's maxims

In addition to the classification of speech acts, Grice (1975) proposes the Cooperative Principle, in which the listener is directly involved in the successful realization of a speech act: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (p.45).

This principle implies decisions on the part of the speaker in terms of "relation", "quality", "quantity" and "manner". The maxim of "relation" instructs the speaker to maintain relevance to the subject; "quality" refers to truthfulness; "quantity" demands that utterances should meet the immediate needs of the conversation and should not be more informative than is necessary; and "manner" refers to the maintenance of clarity. According to these maxims, a conversational turn should be brief, well-organized and unambiguous. If these norms were generally applied in conversation, of course, there would be few opportunities for misunderstanding to occur.

Claims concerning the universality of Grice's maxims have been disputed by anthropologists. In a study of Malagasy society, for example, Keenan and Keenan (1976) concluded that Grice's Maxims of quantity and relation do not apply. It could be suggested, therefore, that Grice's Maxims apply more particularly to the socio-cultural norms of English language speakers, where the violation of a maxim may result from the deliberate intention of being ambiguous, or from a clash between two maxims which prevents the speaker from being as specific as he ought to be. This situation demands that the listener infer what is being implicated. Levinson identifies a two-step process: the irrelevance, inadequacy or inappropriateness of the utterance is recognized, and that activates the listener's inferencing capacity.

If a mutual assumption exists that both the speaker and hearer are observing the principle of cooperation, then the exploitation of these maxims is possible for the generation of conversational implicatures or non-logical inferences which comprise conveyed meaning (Horn 1988, p.119). That is to say, a competent speaker uses and manipulates speech acts along conventionally accepted lines in the knowledge that

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a competent listener has the ability to identify and recognize any deviation from the maxims, and will automatically understand the illocutionary force which is intended in the utterance.

2.3 Appropriacy of language use for the learner

This sub-section considers the difficulties which can arise in cross-cultural communication when a less competent language learner must take decisions in a situation which is culturally unfamiliar. Tannen (1984) identifies eight levels of difference which can potentially create difficulties in cross-cultural communication. One of the most basic of these, the question of when to talk, is culturally relative (Tannen 1984, p.189). She cites the case of Athabaskan Indians, who consider it inappropriate to talk to strangers, thus allowing the development of cross-cultural stereotyping: the Indians are considered "sullen, uncooperative, even stupid" by others, while they regard non-Athabaskan Indians as "ridiculously garrulous and also hypocritical" (Tannen 1984, pp.189f.). Similar stereotyping also exists between Finns and Swedes.

When the speaker has decided to speak, he or she must take a further decision concerning appropriacy – for example, whether in the circumstances to ask a question or tell a story or joke. Tannen cites the acceptance and rejection of compliments among Greek speakers as an example of cultural misunderstanding (Tannen 1984, p.191). In a study of compliments, Manes (1983) observes that while a Greek host completely rejects a compliment on his excellent cooking, an English speaker in the same situation may either deny that the compliment is deserved or alternatively agree that the object or action is the result of effort (pp.101f.). In neither case is the compliment deflected by the English speaker, thus making the Greek speaker's culturally-bound response appear dismissive and curt.

Attitudes towards pauses and periods of silence are also culture-bound, as is speed of speaking. Mutual understanding of these aspects of style affect the interpretation of personality and intention rather than the interpretation of style as such (Tannen 1984, p.191). Thus uninformed interpretation of the subtle signals contained within a native speaker's normal conversational control can result in negative evaluation by a non-native speaker, and this can be "continually reinforced by observation and experience" (Tannen 1984, p.191).

Indirectness may, however, represent the greatest problem for intercultural communication. A situation of negotiation between an American English speaker and a native speaker of Japanese is fraught with

dangers. While Americans tend to value directness and "getting down to brass tacks", (Tannen 1984, p.193), Japanese speakers from the earliest age are encouraged to adopt intuitive and indirect communicative styles "in which each party understands and anticipates the needs of the other [...] before any verbal communication becomes necessary" (Clancy 1990, p.27). The American may therefore appear rude and aggressive to the Japanese, and the Japanese circuitous and hypocritical to the American.

As noted above, Levinson (1983, pp.45f.) identifies two levels at which social and cultural constraints operate on interaction, one cross-situational, having to do with social decorum in general, and the other specific to particular interactional moments or cultural events. He further identifies clear "pan-cultural principles governing the production of polite or socially appropriate interaction". However, although the principles are understood cross-culturally, their realization can differ greatly, as in the contrast between English and Japanese speakers in terms of the social status of participants and referents (Levinson 1983, p.10).

When the question of competence is considered in relation to speech acts, "[f]or any two speech-act strategies to be considered equivalent or at least similar across languages, they have to share a similar potential, illocutionary force relative to the contexts in which they are conventionally used" (Blum-Kulka 1983, p.43). In other words, the realization of the speech act in different languages must result in a similar illocutionary force in order to be considered similar across the languages concerned. This argument implies that if the speech act strategy is shared culturally, the speech act will be successful, but where this is not the case, the norms of appropriacy are immediately violated and the learner is automatically distanced from the communicative act and from the native participants in that act. "The nature of the interdependence among pragmatic, linguistic and social factors that determine speech-act realization varies from one language to another", and "second language learners often fail to realize their speech acts in the target language both in terms of effectiveness (getting their meaning across) and in terms of social appropriateness" (Blum-Kulka 1983, p.38). It can be concluded, therefore, that preconceived perceptions of the universality of certain speech acts can hold many pitfalls for the language learner. Particular problems arise in the case of indirect speech acts, and Wolfson (1970, quoted in Wolfson and Judd 1983, p.xi) illustrates this in regard to ambiguous invitations, for example, "We

must get together some time". In addition, Johnston (1973) identifies the problem of knowing what is nonsense, and Scarcella (1979, quoted in Wolfson and Judd 1983, p.xi) found high error percentages in terms of the actual language used in carrying out a variety of idiomatic stereotyped speech acts.

Blum-Kulka (1982, p.33) argues that "conventional indirect speech acts represent a special case of interdependence between conventions of language and conventions about the use of language". As a result of this relationship, the student must actively learn new strategies for performing such acts, as well as the underlying social attitudes which determine them. However, some cultures take the strategy of indirectness to greater lengths than English speakers, and Beebe and Takahashi (1989, pp.103–125) illustrate the failure of competence in a Japanese speaker of English who uses "inscrutibly indirect" means to convey an urgent message.

In a study of requests, Blum-Kulka hypothesizes that the request schema contains a pragmalinguistic component which is responsible for the structure and functions of requesting repertoires in given languages. Thus the competence of the learner in making requests depends on his pragmalinguistic proficiency. As culture also plays an important part in decisions regarding speech acts, the request schema is subject to a cultural filter which helps to determine which form is situationally appropriate (Blum-Kulka 1991, pp.255f.).

These studies and observations suggest that cultural values are deep-seated and automatic for the native speaker community, and that if the foreigner lacks real knowledge of these, he may never understand exactly what message is being conveyed (Rubin 1983, p.10).

2.4   Speech Act research in the native speaker community

Wolfson (1983a, pp.82–95) describes the role played by compliments in American English. She holds that "descriptive analysis of speech acts provides [an insight] about the social structure and value system of the target speech community" (p.93). The corpus of compliments collected for this study represented varying socio-economic groups, occupations, and levels of education, and relationships between interlocutors ranging from total strangers to intimate friends and family members.

The examples of compliments were studied for linguistic patterning and demonstrated great similarities both in syntax and in the lexical items selected, one syntactic pattern accounted for more than 50% of

all the data collected:

$$NP + is/looks (really) + ADJ \qquad (Wolfson\ 1983,\ p.85)$$

Two adjectives, "nice" and "good", accounted for 42% of all the data. From this it can be concluded that compliments in English are formulaic in nature, and this should facilitate acquisition by learners. However, the study also demonstrated that "compliments differ cross-culturally not only in the way they are structured but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and the functions they serve" (Wolfson 1983a, p.87).

The question of function may prove to be the most confusing for the learner. Wolfson indicates that compliments are used (i) to encourage, (ii) to congratulate, and, most importantly, (iii) to strengthen or even replace other speech act formulas such as apologies, thanks, greetings and even criticism. The native speaker must be aware of the range of possible contexts for the speech act of complimenting, which arises from certain factors that "must always be assumed to be culture-specific" (Wolfson 1983a, p.93) and thus can constitute a situation of potential misunderstanding for the speaker who is socially or culturally unaware. In their study of the act of inviting as performed by native speakers of English, Wolfson et al. (1983) argue that "non-native speakers cannot expect to interact effectively in English if they depend on the rules of their native languages and speech communities in similar situations in the target language" (p.116).

The "rules" that govern communicative competence fall below the level of conscious awareness, and native speakers have an intuitive ability to recognize the force of the communicative act and respond appropriately. The study by Wolfson et al. shows that an unambiguous invitation includes a request for a response, which may be marked by intonational contour. It is nonetheless clearly perceived by the interlocutor as an invitation, and the context is mutually understood. They cite the invitation "Lunch?" as an example.

However, the act of inviting often involves a process of negotiation in which the interlocutors proceed through a series of steps towards the completed invitation. A "lead" is used as an opening move and can be formulated with varying degrees of explicitness. The invitation will follow, but only if the initial response is encouraging. An expressive lead, such as

<div style="text-align: center;">
I'd really   (like to + VP
                  (love
</div>

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is usually followed by a second lead which establishes the availability of the interlocutor. Some availability leads, however, exhibit ambiguity with regard to the illocutionary point, as for example:

Do you have a lot of work to do tonight?

Even vaguer is the formulaic type of lead in which time is left indefinite and the verb tense is often marked by the presence of a modal auxiliary. Invitations of this type rarely call for an immediate and direct response. Examples are:

We'll have to get together soon.

Maybe we can have lunch sometime.

In this form of invitation even a native speaker can find it difficult to assess the sincerity of the invitation and decide how best to respond. The negotiation process serves to protect the speaker from possible rejection as he can control the direction of negotiation and take evasive action if necessary.

An additional variable in the act of inviting is the social status of the participants. The responses to the negotiation process depend on social identity. Social inequality favours a direct approach, while equality tends to lead to longer negotiation. Solidarity is also created by speakers sharing a commonality of purpose, sex or profession (Wolfson et al. 1983, pp.125f.). Thus the act of inviting is characterized by variable conversational moves and variable speaker relationships, and although some aspects of this speech act may be formulaic in nature, its successful realization depends on many other factors which require both communicative competence and a knowledge of the social norms of the speech community in question.

2.5 Speech Act performance by second language learners

In a study of speech act performance by second language learners, Blum Kulka (1982, pp.29-59) asks whether language learners can acquire knowledge of all the communicative properties necessary for effective use of the target language in the light of the interdependence between the social and linguistic rules that govern the effective use of language in context (p.29). She argues that "situational, social and linguistic knowledge must be present for success" (p.30).

Blum Kulka's study focuses on indirectness in speech acts as a feature of the general ethos of some societies. Brown and Levinson (1978) point out that all acts of social control fall into the category of indirectness in order to avoid threatening the interlocutor's territory

or autonomy, and that "the application of these principles differs systematically across cultures and within cultures across subcultures, categories and groups" (p.283). Blum Kulka tested three hypotheses. The first was that certain features of indirect speech act performance are probably based on universal principles, which include an ability to infer communicative intentions where the inference is not based directly on any linguistic convention, an ability to realize speech acts in linguistically non-explicit ways, and a general sensitivity to con-textual constraints in the use of indirect forms. The second hypo-thesis was that indirectness is governed by language- and culture-specific conventions and that the norms of social appropriacy can be violated. Blum-Kulka's third hypothesis was that a range of conven-tional forms is available in any language for the indirect realization of speech acts, and these govern the potential illocutionary force of any conventional indirect form across situations. This means that second language learners may fail to realize their speech acts in a pragmatically effective manner, with the result that the intended illocutionary force is not conveyed (Blum Kulka 1982, pp.36f.).

Blum Kulka's experimental instrument was a discourse completion test. The subjects were adult learners of Hebrew, adult native speakers of Hebrew, and adult native speakers of English, so that comparison was possible between the groups. The experimental evidence indicated (i) that the language use of learners often violates social acceptability norms, (ii) that deviations from linguistic acceptability occur in utterances which, although grammatically correct, fail to conform to the target language in "idiomatic" speech act realization, and most importantly, (iii) that "the most serious consequence of deviations from native usage in speech act realization is an unintended shift in the pragmatic force of the utterance" (Blum-Kulka 1982, p.52). Blum-Kulka concludes that

> the learner's pragmatic, non-linguistic component of general communicative competence will enable him to relate linguistic information to situational context and to accept the existence of direct and indirect means in the target language. Nevertheless, the complex nature of the interdependence between pragmatic, linguistic and social factors in the target language will often prevent him from getting his meaning across.   (Blum-Kulka 1982, p.53)

In a study of the development of pragmatic awareness in regard to conversational closures, Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991, p.4) conclude that

"speakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least or, more seriously, rude or insulting". This, they maintain, is a problem especially for advanced learners, whose high level of proficiency causes their interlocutors to expect "concomitantly high pragmatic competence" (ibid.). The empirical study reported in this paper focuses specifically on advanced learners of English and thus considers the seriousness of inappropriacy for non-native speakers at higher levels of general language proficiency.

Rubin (1983) studied the question of identifying and making a negative response. Comparing the form-function relationship across cultures, she concludes that "one form may be used to mean different things in another culture than in one's own", and "a foreigner who wants to communicate appropriately must develop the competence of sending and receiving 'no' messages" (p.10). Such knowledge is dependent not only on form and function but also on the "underlying values inherent in the speech act" (p.17).

Rubin identifies nine methods of refusing, ranging from silence to the deliberate diversion of the speaker from the topic under discussion, and concludes that three levels of knowledge are essential in order to send or receive a "no" message: (i) the appropriate form-function relation must be learnt, (ii) the social parameters which enter into the speech act must be understood, and (iii) a knowledge of the underlying values of the target-language society is essential (ibid., p.17). Thus the correct use of the form-function relation may not in itself lead to the achievement of appropriate social communication and the language learner must be aware of the necessity of taking social parameters and social values into account.

Blum-Kulka (1983) analyses how variation from language to language in the linguistic realization of a similar procedure can affect the potential illocutionary force of the utterance. In her study of requests in English and Hebrew, she demonstrates that similar linguistic realization of a procedure in the two languages does not produce the same illocutionary force. The common use in English of the conditional form "I would like ..." as a polite request form is typically used in Hebrew to describe a hypothetical situation, while the more direct Hebrew form "I want ..." meets the general social requirement of directness. In other words, the socially appropriate English form does not carry the force of a request in Hebrew. However, in this study, English speakers transferred the form from English without being aware of the resultant loss of illocutionary force (Blum-Kulka 1983,

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pp.40f.). Although the Hebrew direct patterns are capable of being linguistically realized in English in the same contexts and under the same conditions, they could often be considered inappropriate and socially unacceptable. A similar variation exists between English and Japanese speech norms, in which the English use of direct imperatives, for example in advertising slogans, is unacceptable in the Japanese social context, where indirect imperative forms are the accepted norm.

"The degree of directness of any form, relative to culture-specific social norms, affects its illocutionary force potential" (Blum-Kulka 1983, p.46). Second language learners must be aware of the potential illocutionary force of a conventional speech act in the target language in order to avoid weakening or shifting the force of their utterance. Blum-Kulka concludes that failure of this sort is manifested in "wrong lexicalization", such as the transfer of a native language formula to the target language, and "overgeneralization" in the extension of forms to contexts in which native speakers prefer a different strategy (Blum-Kulka 1983, p.51).

This study demonstrates the non-universal aspects of speech acts. Although the basic properties, such as direct and indirect approaches, are shared across languages, their use can differ widely; hence the difficulties encountered by non-native speakers when the socio-cultural norms of their native language differ from those of the target language. Inappropriacy of language use may result in a degree of social unacceptability and the development of tensions and distance between native and non-native speakers. Inappropriate choice of exponents may result from lack of awareness of the target language norms or transfer of native language norms which do not correspond to the norms of the target language. The question of the effect of social distance upon the pragmatically competent realization of speech acts is addressed in the following sections.

3 The study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether learners who were socially distant from the target language group had greater difficulty in achieving pragmatic competence than their peers who exhibited greater social proximity. One subject only was selected from each of six different countries. The instruments of the study were a social distance questionnaire, (Appendix 1, pp.53–55) and a discourse completion test (Appendix 2, pp.55–57).

3.1 Social distance questionnaire

Acton (1979) argues that an optimal socio-cultural distance, as measured by the Professed Difference in Attitude Questionnaire (PDAQ), exists as a function of language proficiency and as a consequence better language learners will be more likely to perceive or profess the same amount of distance on the PDAQ. Acton reports that in his studies of four groups, the results of the PDAQ indicate that better language learners are those who perceive or profess equal distance from their own and the target culture, or the position of anomie. The main hypothesis of this paper differs significantly from that contained in Acton's work. While using the concept of social distance, it hypothesizes that the degree of acculturation into the target culture by the learner is a function of pragmatic competence.

The concept of social distance has already been described in section 1 according to the parameters defined by Schumann (1976). The Social Distance Questionnaire used in this study is closely modelled on Acton's PDAQ (1979), which was subsequently described by Brown (1986, p.42) as a quantifiable method of describing the relationship between social distance and second language acquisition. Designed to measure perceived rather than actual social distance, it is based on the concept of lexical connotation, which Acton defines as comprising "those aspects of the generally agreed upon meaning of a word within a culture that are implied, not explicit; [are] associated with a word but not part of a 'dictionary entry'; [are] generally seen as related to the emotional content, feelings or reaction to a word" (1979, p.5). Acton holds that the connotations which are attached to words by a particular culture are systematizable in principle. The words that were selected for the questionnaire are all conventionalized throughout the culture and do not represent idiosyncratic meanings (ibid., p.11). Lexical connotation is not dependent on dictionary-type knowledge, but is "implicit and subject to the perceptions of the speaker (and hearer)" (Acton 1979, pp.14f.). Language, and the specific use of culturally recognized lexical items, evokes automatic and internal responses in the hearer, so that true meaning could be said to occur from the meeting between the item of vocabulary and the knowledge already held, within cultural parameters, by the hearer.

Acton's (1979) PDAQ asks the subject to quantify his perception of the differences in attitude towards various concepts on three dimensions. First the subject gives his own responses to the words or concepts; then he indicates how he thinks a fellow countryman might

respond; and finally he indicates how he thinks a native of the target culture (in this case Irish) might respond. Thus the subject must indicate the extent to which he perceives his attitudes to vary from those of two other groups. Acton argues that if a subject professes attitudes which are far removed from either or both of the reference groups, then it may be assumed that he is failing to identify with either group. In order to achieve what could be described as a working relationship, it would be necessary for the subject to achieve a less distant stance (p.41).

The original PDAQ (Acton 1979) contains twenty "concept" words with two pairs of adjectives related to each of them. Each adjective pair represents two poles or extremes of thought or belief which are relevant to the item in question, and the subject must indicate the three positions he perceives on a six-point scale. The scales deliberately preclude the subject from opting for a mid point, thus forcing him to express a perceived attitude which tends towards one or other side of the adjective pair.

I found it necessary to change a number of the concept items as they appear in Acton's original questionnaire. Some are specifically relevant to the American context, as for example *labor unions, Americans* and *American women*, while others lack immediate relevance to the Irish context, as for example *nakedness, psychology* and *the Olympic Games*. The U.S. is included as it represents a major influential factor throughout the world which may, however, be perceived differently in different cultures. The items which have been added to the questionnaire for this study were judged to be prominent and important features of Irish social life. These are *alcoholic drink, a female president, mother, the Irish* and *Ireland*.

Taken overall, the concepts included in the questionnaire fall into two main categories. Firstly there are those which are concerned with groups. The formal groups include *the U.S., the U.N., the Irish* and *my country*, while the informal groups are *old people, children, poor people, father* and *mother*. The other category is that of activities and conditions. The formal items in this category are *television, religion* and *newspapers*. The informal aspects include *divorce, censorship, birth control, the future* and *alcoholic drink*. The case of the female president is specific and, to an extent, exceptional. (The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 1.)

3.2 The subjects of the study

The subjects of the study were a number of adult learners of

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English as a foreign language. They were studying in the target language environment and living with native host families. Thus they were learning English both within a formal classroom context and within the context of naturalistically produced language, as used by native speakers. All of the subjects had already attained Upper Intermediate and Advanced EFL levels, so that lack of knowledge about grammatical structures and appropriate lexical items should not seriously impede their language reception or production. The subjects' levels had been determined by a standard placement test on arrival. This test was supplemented by an oral proficiency test corresponding to Trinity College London Grade 9. The interview test was also used to elicit the subjects' reasons for learning the language and to categorize their motivation. The subjects were questioned as to how they would use the language in future and why they had chosen to study in Ireland.

All of the learners in the study group appeared to be highly motivated to improve their existing knowledge of the language. In some cases motivation was largely instrumental, for the purpose of either further study or career advancement. Other subjects were both integratively and instrumentally motivated, and they appeared to demonstrate a generally high degree of integration into the native speaking community.

Acton (1979) describes similarity of attitudes as one of the criteria for 'liking' and holds that membership of a group is based at least in part on shared attitudes. Therefore if the PDAQ demonstrates that the subject professes to hold very different attitudes from one or both of the reference groups, then it may be assumed that he is not identifying with or 'liking' one or either group (p.42).

3.3 Profiles of individual subjects

Nationality	Age	Sex	Education	Reasons for learning	EFL level	Length of residence (months)
German	23	F	Third	Career	Advanced	2.25
Japanese	24	F	Third	Career/ Integration	Advanced	3.00
Libyan	26	M	Third	Career	Upper Intermediate	2.50
Ethiopia	27	M	Third	Career	Advanced	2.50
Italian	22	F	Third	Career/ Integration	Advanced	2.00
Spanish	24	F	Third	Career/ Integration	Advanced	3.00

3.4 Length of residence

The period of time that a learner spends in the target language environment is likely to be an influential factor with regard to acculturation. The correlation between length of residence and acculturation may however vary considerably from individual to individual and may be dependent to a large extent upon the learner's reason for learning, so that affective factors come into play. Thus an immigrant worker may view the "alien" environment negatively, while a learner with integrative or even instrumental motivation may have a more positive attitude to the learning situation in all its aspects.

Acton (1979) holds that over time, changes may be observed in perception of socio-cultural distance, and that these are a function of changes in attitude generally to the target group, re-construal in order to rationalize one's behaviour, and the effect of the input of new information to explain or clarify the norms of the target culture (p.42).

The length of time the subjects of this study had been resident in Ireland was taken into consideration: at the time of the study all had spent between two and three months in the target language environment and had thus had similar opportunities for acculturation as well as a similar level of proficiency in English. The PDAQ was designed to discriminate between the members of the study group and thus determine variation in individual distance.

3.5 Discourse completion task

This type of test was used in order to provide a wide variety of different contexts and thereby observe the subjects' pragmatic performance as extensively as possible. The test was administered as part of a normal teaching programme, so that the subjects were not aware of the objective of the exercise. Accordingly it seems reasonable to assume that their responses represent spontaneous replies, and that their performance was not significantly influenced by considerations other than their own pragmatic competence.

In the Discourse Completion Test (Appendix 2), the subjects were presented with a piece of unfinished dialogue and asked to insert two responses: (i) a direct translation of how they would reply in their own language, and (ii) what they believed was appropriate in English. The situations were designed to provide a range of relationships and contexts such as boss/employee, friend/friend, older person/younger person, and younger relative/older relative, in order to elicit the subject's awareness of degrees of formality and respect.

The situations also provide a range of functions, with emphasis being placed upon those functions that require sensitive social awareness. They include refusing, criticizing, apologizing, thanking and suggesting. These speech acts belong to the categories of Commissive, Directive and Expressive as defined by Searle (1969). The Directive and Expressive speech acts are wholly communicative, being dependent upon both a speaker and hearer in order to be fully realized. In order to establish a standard for comparison, the test was also completed by five native speakers in the same age range as the subjects, none of whom had any experience or awareness of language teaching.

4 Results

4.1 Social distance test

As previously explained, the PDAQ measures social distance on the basis of the subjects' scores on a six-point scale of Self, Country and Ireland. The distance between these scores (obtained by subtracting the lesser score from the greater) then gives the measures of distance between Self/Country (S/C), Self/Ireland (S/I), and Country/Ireland (C/I). As the scale contains six points, the maximum score possible on any single connotation is five and the minimum is zero (i.e. no distance). As there are 38 connotations (19 concepts with two sets of connotations in each) the maximum potential score on the test for any of the distance measures is 190, and the minimum potential score is zero. The scores were summed on the test for Self/Country, Self/Ireland and Country/ Ireland to give total perceived distance scores in the three categories.

Details of the scores resulting from the PDAQ test are given in Appendix 3.

4.1.1 Japanese subject

The total scores for the PDAQ test of the Japanese subject were as follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
46	19	53

As can be seen from these scores, the Japanese subject perceived himself as being closer to (i.e. less distant from) country than to Ireland. The perceived distance between Japan (country) and Ireland is of similar magnitude to the perceived distance between self and Ireland. The

plots of the perceived distance between self/country against self/Ireland are numerically indicated in Appendix 3, Matrix 1 (p.58). A number of patterns emerge. First, the perceived distance scores are generally low. In the case of self/country thirty-four of the thirty-eight scores (89%) are in the zero and one categories. More significantly in the case of self/Ireland, twenty of the thirty-eight (53%) are in the zero and one categories. While in the case of the former (S/C) this represents a nearness to country, in the case of the latter (S/I) this may contain an element of conservative marking. Secondly, fifteen of the thirty-eight entries (39%) on the scatter plot/matrix indicate a distance which is equally distant (or more accurately close, as the scores are low) from both country and Ireland. This indicates a significant level of anomie (cf. 1.8 above). Thirdly, of those results which indicate a closeness to country or to Ireland (excluding those equally close to both) of which there are twenty-three in total, twenty (87%) are closer to country (more distant from Ireland) and only three (13%) are closer to Ireland. This indicates that the Japanese subject has a perception of being much closer to country than to Ireland.

4.1.2 Spanish subject

The total scores for the PDAQ test of the Spanish subject were as follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
94	94	65

Overall the Spanish subject's perception is of being closer to Ireland than to country (i.e. perceived distance of S/I is less than that of S/C). The perceived distance between C/I and S/C is the same. The plots of S/C against S/I are indicated in Appendix 3, Matrix 2 (p.58). Again a number of patterns emerge. First, the perceived distance of S/C and S/I are well scattered, scores in both cases ranging from zero to five. Secondly, nine of the thirty-eight plots (24%) show equal values for S/C and S/I, indicating a degree of anomie, but not as pronounced as that of the Japanese subject. Thirdly, twenty-two (76%) of the remaining twenty-nine plots (closer to country or closer to Ireland) are closer to Ireland, with the remaining seven (24%) being closer to country, indicating that the Spanish subject has a perception of being much closer to country than to Ireland.

4.1.3 German subject

The total scores for the German subject's PDAQ test were as

follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
41	40	43

Overall the German subject's perceived distance is almost equal in the three situations. The plots of S/C against S/I are indicated in Appendix 3, Matrix 3 (p.59). Whilst there is some scatter, twenty-four of the thirty-eight plots (63%), are in the zero and one categories for both S/C and S/I. This would tend to indicate equal closeness (as scores are low) of self to both country and Ireland. Secondly, fourteen of the thirty-eight scores (37%) have an equality of perceived distance between self and country and self and Ireland, indicating a significant level of anomie. Finally, of the remaining twenty-four scores, thirteen (54%) are closer to Ireland and eleven (46%) are closer to country, indicating a perceived closeness/distance of the same magnitude from country and Ireland.

4.1.4 Libyan subject

The overall perceived distance scores for the Libyan subject were as follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
62	45	61

This indicates a perception of being somewhat closer to country than to Ireland with distance between country and Ireland being almost the same as that between self and Ireland. Appendix 3, Matrix 4 (p.59) indicates the plots of S/C and S/I, a generally dispersed pattern, with some grouping in the lower ranges. Ten (26%) of the thirty-eight entries have S/C and S/I scored equally, indicating some anomie, but lower than that of the German and Japanese subjects. Of the remaining twenty-eight scores, seventeen (61%) are closer to country and eleven (39%) are closer to Ireland, indicating a perceived distance which is closer to country.

4.1.5 Italian subject

The overall scores on the PDAQ for the Italian subject were as follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
28	41	20

This indicates a perception that self is much closer to Ireland than to country, with the distance between Country/Ireland and Self/Ireland being of roughly the same order of magnitude. Appendix 3, Matrix 5 (p.60) indicates the plots of S/C against S/I. Twenty six of the thirty-

eight entries (68%) are in the zero and one categories, indicating a low perceived distance and/or low scoring. Eighteen of the thirty-eight entries (47%) have S/C and S/I equally scored, indicating a considerable degree of anomie. Of the remaining twenty entries, three (15%) are closer to country and seventeen (85%) are closer to Ireland.

4.1.6 Ethiopian subject

Overall the Ethiopian subject's total perceived distance scores were as follows:

Country/Ireland	Self/Country	Self/Ireland
25	47	36

The Ethiopian subject's perceived distance indicates self closer to Ireland than to country, with the distance between country and Ireland being less than S/C and S/I. Appendix 3, Matrix 6 (p.60) indicates the plots of S/C against S/I. The plots indicate a grouping in the zero and one categories, twenty-eight of the thirty-eight entries (74%) having a perceived distance in the zero and one categories in S/C and S/I. Nineteen (50%) of the plots of S/C against S/I are equally close/distant from both, indicating a high degree of anomie. Of the remaining nineteen plots, fifteen (79%) are closer to Ireland and only four (21%) are closer to country.

4.1.7 Comparison of results of PDAQ analysis

In order to compare the PDAQ tests of Self/Country and Self/Ireland it is necessary to express the results on the same base as different subjects may mark more conservatively than others. This process, normalizing, is achieved by summing S/C and S/I and expressing each as a percentage of the total, with the percentage difference between the two representing the distance between Country and Ireland. The results of this for the six subjects are as follows (percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and rank order is indicated in brackets):

	Self/Country	Self/Ireland	Country/Ireland
Japanese	26 (1)	74 (6)	48 (1)
Spanish	59 (5)	41 (2)	18 (3)
German	48 (3)	52 (4)	11 (6)
Libyan	42 (2)	58 (5)	16 (4)
Italian	67 (6)	33 (1)	34 (2)
Ethiopian	57 (4)	43 (3)	14 (5)

An alternative method of considering closer to Ireland is to consider the results of S/C plotted against S/I. This gives three possibilities, closeness to Ireland, closeness to country, equally close to both. The comparison of the results of this analysis is as follows (again percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and rank order is indicated in brackets):

	Closer to Country		Closer to Ireland		Equally Close	
Japanese	20	(1)	3	(6)	15	(3)
Spanish	7	(4)	22	(1)	9	(6)
German	11	(3)	13	(4)	14	(4)
Libyan	17	(2)	11	(5)	10	(5)
Italian	3	(6)	17	(2)	18	(2)
Ethiopian	4	(5)	15	(3)	19	(1)

It is particularly noticeable from the above results that closest to Ireland is not inversely related to closest to country. For example, the Spanish subject is ranked first on closest to Ireland but only fourth (rather than sixth) on closest to country. In addition, the Ethiopian is relatively highly ranked (third) and the German is lower in rank (fourth) and therefore more distant from Ireland. The opposite might have been expected in this case. If the hypothesis proposed in this paper is correct, the rank order of closest to Ireland, as indicated above, should be reflected in the results of the Discourse Completion Test.

4.2 Findings of the discourse completion task

In order to evaluate the subjects' performance in this test, each subject's set of responses was analysed and examined in relation to a standard response. Examples of this may be seen in the following section. The standard response was drawn up from a compilation of answers provided by native speakers.

While the required speech acts were in many cases quite obvious, as for example refusing a request or making a suggestion, their realization differed considerably from subject to subject. The initial analysis determined how many "segments" (phrases or clauses) were used by subjects in their responses, and these segments were categorized into different functions, such as greeting, providing a reason, complimenting, and so on. The strength of the responses and the exponents chosen by the subjects also showed some variation, so that it is necessary to consider each subject individually in relation to the standard response.

4.2.1 Japanese subject

This subject differed in two major respects from the standard response. In the first place he used 38 segments in the responses as against 29 for the standard reply, and this included two zero ratings where he did not consider a reply appropriate.

The high number of segments or functions used by this subject is particularly evident in reponses 2, 4 and 8. It is perhaps significant that 2 and 4 take place in the context of the workplace where this subject would appear to exhibit greater inhibition in communication.

Response 2

Standard: Oh, I'm terribly sorry, but we've got tickets for Pavarotti. Thanks very much for inviting us.

Japanese: Thank you very much for the invitation. I really appreciate that. We wish we could go but we've got something to do that night, so I don't think we'll be able to go. I'm terribly sorry about that.

Response 4

Standard: Do you! Well perhaps in a while you'll see the reason for it.

Japanese: Well the disposition of the secretaries has been considered and decided by our company's policy. It's perfectly all right. You go back to work and do your best.

In both responses the illocutionary force of the message is similar, but the Japanese subject appears to demonstrate a greater sense of awareness of the relationship between the superior and inferior in the office hierarchy.

Response 8

Standard: Let's go out somewhere nice!

Japanese: Yes it is. What are you going to do now? I am going to see the sea. Would you like to go together?

While the standard response in this case indicates the speaker's confidence in suggesting directly to peers, the Japanese subject approaches the suggestion more tentatively, passing through the processes of agreeing, questioning, stating, and finally asking.

In addition to this the Japanese subject's strength of reply differed from the standard. Thus in replies 10, 14 and 15 the Japanese subject's apologies, thanks and compliments were more pronounced than those of the native speaker:

Response 10

Standard: Oh I'm sorry.

Japanese: I'm so terribly sorry.

Response 14

Standard: Thank you very much.

Japanese: Thank you very much I really appreciate your kindness.

Response 15

Standard: It's lovely. Thank you very much.

Japanese: How wonderful! Thank you so much I'm really pleased.

The Japanese subject did not offer any response to two dialogues. In dialogue number 5 the subject considered it impolite to offer criticism to a peer and therefore failed to make any reply at all. Similarly in number 9, where the subject is asked to make suggestions to a superior in the context of the workplace, this subject failed to respond on the basis that such behaviour would not be acceptable in Japan.

The performance of this subject in the discourse completion test indicates a failure of pragmatic competence corresponding to the social distance indicated by the PDAQ. This learner is still influenced to a considerable extent by Japanese social mores and continues to transfer these into the target language. Thus social distance is contributing to a failure in the achievement of pragmatic competence.

4.2.2   German subject

The German subject used the smallest number of segments of the entire study group (21), and additionally tended to use the less polite forms of language.

In responses 2, 7 and 10 this subject appeared more abrupt than the standard response and thus would be likely to appear impolite to native speakers.

Response 2

| Standard: | Oh I'm terribly sorry, but we've got tickets for Pavarotti. Thanks very much for inviting us. |
| German: | We cannot come. We have our anniversary. |

Response 7

| Standard: | Sorry for disturbing you. Would you mind moving the car, I'm just going out. |
| German: | Could you please move your car out of the way? |

Response 10

| Standard: | Oh I'm sorry, I forgot it completely. I'll post it in the morning. |
| German: | Oh I forgot. I'll post it tomorrow. |

While conveying the message clearly, these replies fail to match the pragmatic expectations of a native speaker interlocutor and could thus create tension.

This subject also selected the form "can" rather than "could" in response 6 and in response 12, where the standard invitation was "We'd love you to join us", the German subject used the form "We invite you and your wife".

The apparent lack of politeness in this subject's brevity of reply and choice of exponents indicates a lack of pragmatic awareness which could create misunderstanding and indeed annoyance in the native speaking community. Therefore this subject, while communicating adequately, is failing in terms of pragmatic competence.

4.2.3 Libyan subject

The Libyan subject used fewer segments (26) than the standard response but also, and more significantly, used a different style of response.

Response 4

| Standard: | Do you? Well perhaps in a while you'll see the reason for it. |
| Libyan: | No. What I did is right and please don't put your nose into subjects which are not your responsibility. |

In this response there is spoken criticism of the inferior person who attempts to make a suggestion.

This subject also failed to thank his interlocutor when pragmatically appropriate, as for example in response 2:

Response 2

Standard: Oh I'm terribly sorry, but we've got tickets for Pavarotti. Thanks very much for inviting us.

Libyan: No I'm sorry, I can't come on Saturday because I have another arrangement.

In response 10 the Libyan subject failed to apologize for making a mistake:

Response 10

Standard: Oh I'm sorry, I forgot it completely. I'll post it in the morning.

Libyan: I didn't post it. It's O.K., it's O.K., I can post it later.

The overall tone of this subject's responses was assertive; indeed, his replies contained 7 assertive statements while the standard response contained only 1.

Thus this subject also demonstrated the effects of social distance in a general lack of awareness as regards appropriacy of language use and in the transference of assertive behaviour and a particular awareness of social grade or level.

4.2.4   Ethiopian subject

While this subject demonstrated similarity to the standard response in terms of the functions chosen and the number of segments used over all the responses (29), the realization of these speech acts bore little resemblance to the standard responses. That is to say, while the message remained the same, the medium differed greatly. Each of this subject's replies was carefully constructed and many were very lengthy, containing explanations or apologies far in excess of those in the standard responses. There is also a generally moral tone to many of the responses (e.g., 4, 5, 7, 9, 15).

Response 1   (This exemplifies the extended turn taken by this

subject.)

Standard: I'm afraid it's out of the question, we're short-handed as it is.

Ethiopian: As far as I know we have principles in our school which should be respected by all staff members regarding regular school hours. I would be happy to fulfil your request but I'm afraid it would be impossible because many of your students have missed hours of tuition.

Response 3

Standard: No I'm sorry, you wouldn't be covered by insurance.

Ethiopian: It would be a great pleasure for me to lend you my car for a whole day. Unfortunately this afternoon coming back from the office I heard a strange noise in the engine and I left it in a garage where they told me I can have it back next week.

As these examples demonstrate, this subject uses similar segments to the standard response, but extends them into long transactional turns with far more extensive explanation than is considered necessary in the standard response.

This subject therefore poses the problem that while he uses a similar set of segments to the standard responses, he utilizes them in a different way, which is at considerable variance with the standard examples. Intuitively therefore it could be said that the Ethiopian subject is transferring a mode of speech from his native language to the target language yet, at the same time, demonstrates an overall high level of pragmatic competence, which would indicate a high degree of social proximity.

4.2.5 Italian subject

This subject utilized two segments more (31) than the standard response with replies 14 and 15 showing the greatest variation from the standard. In these replies, both concerned with expressing thanks, the subject was more effusive than the standard response, reiterating gratitude or admiration several times:

Response 14

Standard: Thank you very much for a lovely gift – it's really

| | kind of you to remember. |
| Italian: | I'm calling to thank you for the beautiful present you sent me. I love it, it's gorgeous, you shouldn't have really. Thanks a million ! |

Response 15

| Standard: | It's beautiful – did you do it all yourselves? Aren't you very clever? Thank you so much. |
| Italian: | Thank you, this is really nice and thoughtful! It's a beautiful picture and you've done it very well. Very good! Thanks! You're too nice! |

Otherwise this subject's responses demonstrated great similarity to the standard ones, with the same functions being used, occasionally in a different order. What is more, he also used the polite forms "would" and "could" in responses 6 and 12 and thus demonstrated awareness of different social contexts.

The overall performance of this subject would correspond accurately with the results of the PDAQ indicating good social proximity to the target language culture and an ability to use the target language with pragmatic effectiveness.

4.2.6 Spanish subject

This subject also demonstrated a high degree of proximity to the standard response forms, in the majority of cases using the same functions as the standard responses. One significant difference, however, occurs in response 5, where this subject is more direct than the standard response in commenting upon a friend's clothes:

Response 5

| Standard: | They're O.K. – very nice. |
| Spanish: | To be frank, I don't think they suit you, they're not your style. |

It is impossible to determine whether this single reply is merely an indication of the personality of the subject, or whether it indicates a directness which is not appropriate to the target language.

4.3 Comparison of answers in Discourse Completion Task

In terms of comparing the answers provided by the subjects in the Discourse Completion Test to the standard (native-speaker) responses, three options are available: (i) responses are the same as in

the standard response (coded as S), (ii) answers are different (coded as D), and (iii) answers in the standard response were not included in the subject's response (coded as 0). It is possible to argue that the number of responses which are the same as the standard response is indicative of the closeness to the target language of the subject. This may relate to "closer to Ireland" in the PDAQ. It could be suggested also that the responses which are different indicate closeness to country (or more accurately, distance from Ireland). More tenuously, it could be suggested that the omitted responses indicate distance between country and Ireland.

In order to compare the various responses it is necessary to express them as a percentage of the same relative base, that is, to normalize them. In the case of responses the same as and different from the standard response, this is the total number of responses of each subject. In the case of omitted responses, this is the number of responses in the standard example.

The percentage of the responses in each of these categories is as follows (figures in brackets indicate rank order):

	Same	Different	Omitted
Japanese	45 (6)	55 (1)	41 (3)
Spanish	65 (2)	35 (5)	41 (3)
German	62 (3)	38 (3)	55 (1)
Libyan	54 (5)	46 (2)	52 (2)
Italian	81 (1)	19 (6)	10 (6)
Ethiopian	62 (3)	38 (3)	38 (5)

4.4 Comparison of PDAQ and discourse completion task

Comparing the rankings derived from the above tests gives the following:

	PDAQ Test						Discourse Completion Test		
	S/C	S/I	C/I	CC	CI	EC	Same	Different	Omitted
Japanese	1	6	1	1	6	3	6	1	3
Spanish	5	2	3	4	1	6	2	5	3
German	3	4	6	3	4	4	3	3	1
Libyan	2	5	4	2	5	5	5	2	2
Italian	6	1	2	6	2	2	1	6	6
Ethiopian	4	3	5	5	3	1	3	3	5

The closest fit between related rankings in terms of nearness to Ireland is that between the normalized S/I (in the PDAQ) and the "Same" in the Discourse Completion Test. The only difference is that the Ethiopian and German are ranked third and fourth respectively on the S/I ranking and equal third on the "Same" table.

Conversely, the normalized S/C on the PDAQ is a good indicator of lack of pragmatic competence in the target language. As regards distance between cultures, there is no apparent significant relationship between either C/I or EC on the PDAQ, and Omitted on the Discourse Completion Test. This suggests (i) that the omitted category on the Discourse Completion Test is not a good indicator of the distance between country and Ireland, and/or (ii) that C/I and EC measures are not related to the omitted category in the Discourse Completion Test, and (iii) that anomie is not a significant factor in the acquisition of pragmatic competence.

Those subjects who perceived proximity to the target language culture, also performed best on the Discourse Completion Test. Thus the Italian and Spanish subjects, who were ranked first and second in the PDAQ on the Self/Ireland scale, were also ranked first and second in the "Same" category of the Discourse Completion Test. Likewise the Libyan and Japanese subjects appeared in the same ranking positions on both tables, fourth and fifth respectively. A slight discrepancy occurs between the Ethiopian and German, who rank third and fourth in the PDAQ, but share joint third position on the Discourse Completion Test.

These results suggest that the S/I scale on the PDAQ test is a good predictor of pragmatic competence, and also that there is a relationship between perceived social distance and pragmatic performance in second language learners. This indicates that (i) the normalized S/I ranking is an indicator of pragmatic competence, and – more significantly for the purposes of this paper – (ii) there is a positive relationship between perceived closeness to the target language culture and pragmatic competence in the target language.

5 Implications of the study

5.1 Pedagogical implications

While a low level of expectation of the learner's pragmatic competence may be true of early and less proficient learners, it seems less acceptable at higher levels of fluency when language proficiency

causes interlocutors to expect "concomitantly high pragmatic competence" (Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991, p.4). Failure to achieve a high level of pragmatic competence can produce different results, as can be seen by the results of the Discourse Completion Test. The non-native speaker may appear rude and curt, aggressive, or uncertain and lacking in confidence. It is easy to see how pragmatic failure can cause the native speaker interlocutor to become annoyed or irritated, or even to misunderstand the non-native speaker's communicative purpose.

Thus information about sociolinguistic appropriacy becomes an essential part of classroom activity. Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991, p.5) describe the role of the classroom teacher as "making students more aware that pragmatic functions exist in language, specifically in discourse, in order that they may be more aware of these functions as learners". Raising learners' awareness of pragmatic procedures could help to lessen the affects of social distance and develop greater sensitivity to cultural conventions as transmitted through language. Sharwood Smith (1991, p.121) in considering the notion of consciousness-raising in language learning, suggests that a pedagogical focus on salience is met by the internal salience of the learner and the result is effective input. While Sharwood Smith limits this theory to the creation and identification of grammatical language, such a theory could possibly be applied effectively to consciousness of cultural norms and pragmatic competence. However, due consideration would have to be given to the possible lack of internally created salience in the learner whose culture is distant, and for whom consciousness raising may have no effect on development because the input is non-salient.

From the present study it could be suggested that in more extreme cases of social distance, factors such as length of residence and proficiency in the target language have not succeeded in fully overcoming the effects of social distance. This suggests that the necessity exists, at least in some cases, for explicit treatment of cultural issues in language teaching programmes, with a progression towards more implicit input as internal salience is developed within the learner. At the same time, it may be that language learning which takes place in a situation removed from the target language culture and society, may be less successful in terms of pragmatic competence, due to the lack of immediate reference to the cultural norms associated with the target language.

5.2 Implications for further study

This study raises three issues which would benefit from further exploration:

1 The use of a measure of social distance as a predictor of pragmatic competence. This study was carried out on individual subjects who were identified throughout by their nationalities. A larger study group would be necessary, with as many representatives as possible from different cultural backgrounds, in order to determine the degree to which social distance is an individual phenomenon or whether it may be applied broadly to a nation or a cultural group.

2 Length of residence was fixed for the purpose of this study; however, this requires further examination in terms of the changes in pragmatic competence as length of residence increases. Intuition would suggest that such changes would probably be positive in nature, but the social distance factor may possibly serve to impede the learner's pragmatic development. That is to say, learners exhibiting higher levels of social distance may fail to develop pragmatic competence as quickly as those with less perceived social distance despite longer residence in the target language culture. This could be related to the factor of non-salience in the learner such that input remains ineffective.

3 The use of segments in the analysis of discourse requires further examination. This method, developed by the present researcher, proved an effective means of quantifying pragmatic performance by relating the subjects' performance to a standard sample produced by native speakers, and the analysis yielded a rank order which facilitated comparison with other tables.

5.3 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this study suggests that a relationship exists between a learner's social distance from the target language culture and his achievement of pragmatic competence at otherwise high levels of linguistic fluency. A measure of the learner's social distance could make it possible to predict his pragmatic competence, and this could be used in the preparation of teaching programmes.

The question of pragmatic competence becomes increasingly significant with the development and growth of international communities in the business and academic spheres, and as a result of travel generally.

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The acquisition of pragmatic competence by a language learner lessens the distance between the native and non-native speaker and helps to remove the threatening element which can enter such unequal discourse. This gains additional significance when the speakers are involved in situations of negotiation.

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Appendix 1

Social Distance Questionnaire (PDAQ)

In this questionnaire you are asked to determine opinion at three different levels. First of all "S" is your own opinion of the item in question. Then "C" is your own Countryman's opinion as you would imagine it to be. Thirdly you are asked to express the opinion of the Irish person "I" on the same topic. Please think about the different subjects and try to answer this as accurately as you can.

TELEVISION

S		_:_:_:_:_:_	
C	Not Valuable	_:_:_:_:_:_	Valuable
I		_:_:_:_:_:_	

S		_:_:_:_:_:_	
C	Honest	_:_:_:_:_:_	Dishonest
I		_:_:_:_:_:_	

CENSORSHIP

Dangerous	Safe
Needed	Not Needed

MY COUNTRY

Developed	Undeveloped
Powerful	Powerless

OLD PEOPLE

Wise	Foolish
Flexible	Inflexible

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RELIGION

Alive   Dead
Valuable   Not Valuable

FATHER

Respected   Not Respected
Wise   Foolish

THE FUTURE

Happy   Sad
Safe   Dangerous

DIVORCE

Necessary   Unnecessary
Good   Bad

BIRTH CONTROL

Needed   Not needed
Good   Bad

NEWSPAPERS

Respected   Not respected
Important   Unimportant

CHILDREN

Needed   Not needed
Powerful   Not powerful

POOR PEOPLE

Happy   Sad
Temporary   Permanent

THE U.S.

Powerful   Powerless
Respected   Not respected

THE U.N.

Important   Unimportant
Strong   Weak

ALCOHOLIC DRINK

Social   Anti-social
Good   Bad

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<div align="center">FEMALE PRESIDENT</div>

Usual	Unusual
Effective	Non-effective

<div align="center">MOTHER</div>

Strong	Weak
Gentle	Tough

<div align="center">THE IRISH</div>

Friendly	Unfriendly
Sophisticated	Simple

<div align="center">IRELAND</div>

Neutral	Not Neutral
Strong	Weak

Appendix 2

Discourse Completion Test

In this exercise you will see a situation with a short piece of dialogue. You are asked to complete the dialogue by inserting a reply which is appropriate to the situation. The reply may be written first in your own native language, then translated directly from that into English. If you would not normally make any reply in the situation, you may leave the space blank or write "Silence".

1   You are the Principal of a school. One of your teachers asks you for a favour.

Teacher :   I know I've had my holiday leave for this year and although the exams start next week, I'd really like to have the week off.

You:

Teacher: I suppose you won't change your mind.

2   You are an employee in a small business and your boss invites you for a meal on Saturday night.

Boss: We're having a small dinner party on Saturday and we'd like you to come with your wife/husband.

You:

Boss: That's a pity. Perhaps another time.

3   A friend wants to borrow your car on Friday night.

Friend: Could you possibly lend me your car on Friday for a few hours?

You:

Friend: Oh well, I'll see if John can lend me his.

4   You're the manager of a department. A young member of staff suggests some changes in the department.

Staff: I think the secretaries should be in the other office area. They shouldn't be near the entrance.

You:

Staff: Well I thought it was a good idea.

5   Your friend asks your opinion about some new clothes he/she has just bought.

Friend: What do you think of my new clothes?

You:

Friend: Well, I like them and I have to wear them, so the final choice is mine.

6   You have brought a friend to a restaurant for a meal.

You: What would you like to eat?

Friend: I'm not sure I'd like to see the menu.

You: Waiter ...

7   A neighbour parks his car across your gate so that you can't move your own car. You go to his/her house.

You:

Neighbour: O.K. I'll do it straight away.

8   It's a lovely day and you meet friends.

Friends: What a beautiful day!

You:

Friends: That's a great idea, where will we go?

9   Your boss wants to hear some new suggestions from employees in order to improve working conditions.

Boss: Has anybody got anything to propose?

You:

Boss: That's an interesting idea.

10   You have forgotten to post an important letter.

Husband: Did you post that letter to the tax office?

You:

Husband: Oh well, never mind I'm sure tomorrow will be time enough.

11   You have made a serious mistake at work and your boss is asking you about it.

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Boss: Well, what have you got to say?

You:

Boss: I accept your apology, but this must never happen again.

12 You are having a party on Saturday and would like your boss to attend.

You:

Boss: Thank you very much - we'd enjoy that.

13 Your young nephew is on holiday and you are planning to take him to the cinema.

You:

Nephew: Yes that would be great!

14 It's your birthday and an elderly aunt sends you a present. You telephone her.

Aunt: How nice to hear you, Happy Birthday!

You:

Aunt: You're welcome, I hope you have a lovely day.

15 The young children that you teach have painted a picture for you.

Children: We made this for you.

You:

Appendix 3
PDAQ Matrices

Matrix 1 – Japanese

Self/Country \ Self/Ireland	0	1	2	3	4	5
5						
4						
3		1				
2		1	2			
1	1	6	1	1	1	
0	7	6	7	4		

Matrix 2 – Spanish

Self/Country \ Self/Ireland	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	3		2			2
4	1	1		1		2
3	2	3	2	1		
2	4	3	2	1		
1	1	1		1		
0	3				2	3

Matrix 3 – German

Self/Country \ Self/Ireland	0	1	2	3	4	5
5						
4						
3		2		1	1	
2		1		3		
1	8	7		1	1	
0	7	2		3		

Matrix 4 – Libyan

Self/Country \ Self/Ireland	0	1	2	3	4	5
5						
4						
3	1	1	1	1	1	
2	1	1	2	1		
1	3	4	1	1	2	
0	3	5	5	3		

Matrix 6 – Ethiopian

Self/Country	0	1	2	3	4	5
5						
4					2	
3		1		2	1	
2		3				
1	11	9		1		
0	6	2				

Self/Ireland

Matrix 5 – Italian

Self/Country	0	1	2	3	4	5
5						
4	5		1	1		
3		1				
2		3	4			
1	9	3				
0	11					

Self/Ireland

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NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS